

From the moment the mail left California or Missouri it never stopped. At top speed the rider galloped for the nearest station, 10 or 15 miles away. There a fresh horse was saddled, ready to go. In a flash the rider sprang from his weary horse to a fresh one and dashed on his way! About every 75 miles the mailbag was turned over to a new rider, who galloped on at breakneck speed.

The first telegraph joins East and West.
A number of years before this time, Samuel F. B. Morse invented a new way of sending messages. He sent

A GREAT IDEA The tele-
graph



The Story of the Oregon Territory

Many Americans went to California to look for gold. Some of the Americans who first went to Oregon and Washington were looking for furs.

prairie *mouth organ*

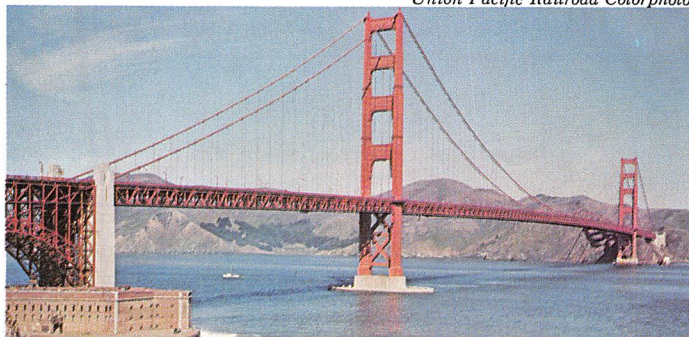
Why did many settlers move to the Oregon Territory?

How did the fur traders open up this territory? After the Revolutionary War, American sea captains began to stop along the Oregon coast. They got valuable furs from the Indians in exchange for blankets, knives, and beads.

In 1805 the Lewis and Clark expedition traveled down the Columbia River to the



Union Pacific Railroad Colorphoto



Pacific Ocean. They reported that this country was rich in furs.

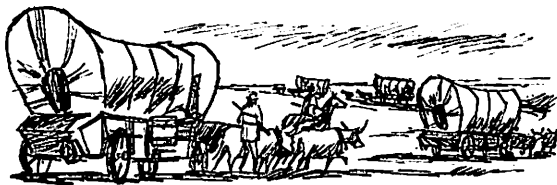
Some time later, John Jacob Astor of New York read the reports of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Astor had become rich by trading in furs. He decided to open a fur-trading post in Oregon.

In 1811 his men built a little fort near the mouth of the Columbia River. It was called Astoria. This was the first American settlement in Oregon. For a few years after that, the only Americans in this territory were fur traders.

Missionaries encourage Americans to come to the Oregon Territory. One day in 1832 four Indians started out from Oregon. They walked or paddled in canoes all the way to St. Louis, Missouri. There they asked that someone bring them the white man's religion.

As a result of this visit, Jason Lee and Marcus Whitman and their wives went to Oregon as missionaries. Before long, they were sending letters to their friends in the East, urging them to move to Oregon. They wrote that the climate was delightful. They said that the soil was fertile, and the rivers were full of fish. Before long, many new settlers were on their way to the green valleys of the Oregon country.

A Letter About the Oregon Trail



October 20, 1847

Dear friend Anna,

Are you surprised to get this letter from far-off Oregon? The last time I wrote you, we lived in Illinois. But we had real hard times in Illinois last year. Crops were poor

and prices were low. So we decided to sell our farm and move to Oregon to get a fresh start.

It took us three months to get ready for the trip. I made extra clothes for Richard and myself and the two children. We smoked hams and bacon, dried apples and peaches, bought barrels of flour and bags of cornmeal, rice, sugar, coffee, tea, and salt.

We finally managed to get everything packed in our new wagon. I couldn't bear to leave my grandmother's organ behind, so Richard managed to get it in somehow. In addition to food, clothing, and furniture, we carried medicines, pots and pans, an iron stove, a water keg, rope, a rifle, a plow, and tools.

On April 15, we drove our wagon to St. Louis and boarded a riverboat for our trip up the Missouri. When we unloaded at Independence, Missouri, we camped near a spring. We cooked in the open and made friends with people from Indiana, Ohio, and other states.

We soon joined a wagon train for the journey over the trail. Before we joined, we signed a paper promising to obey all the rules voted by the members of the company. Then on May 7, the 21 wagons in our company started west.

It was a beautiful day. The sky was blue, spring flowers were blooming, and the fresh, green grass of the prairie stretched on and on, as far as the eye could see.

Each night we drew our wagons into a tight circle near a spring or creek. There we cooked supper. After supper the children



would scamper off to play. Then one of the men would get out his mouth organ and perhaps we would sing or have a dance right out on the prairie under the stars. What fun we had!

At night the men took turns guarding the cattle from any roving bands of Indians. Each morning at five o'clock the guard would fire a shot. The men went after the oxen, the boys gathered wood and carried water, and the women and girls started fires and made breakfast. By seven o'clock, when the bugle blew, the pots and pans and tents were packed again, the oxen yoked, and the wagons ready to roll off across the endless prairie.

But it was a long, hard trip—almost 2,000 miles across green prairies and dry plains and over mountains. We climbed hills so steep that eight pairs of oxen were needed to haul one wagon to the top. We forded rivers that had dangerous quicksand. We dragged through deep mud or traveled in dust so thick that we could hardly breathe. Often we were lucky to make five miles in a whole day.

Many times I was frightened. Five of our friends died of cholera and were buried on the lonely plains. Once the Indians tried to

raid our cattle. Several times we ran dreadfully short of water. In the mountains, one of our oxen went lame; to lighten the load, we had to throw out many of our supplies and my grandmother's organ. There were



terrible thunderstorms. The lightning flashed, the thunder roared, and the rain would pour right through the canvas top of the wagon until everything was soaked.

But now after five months on the trail, we are all safe in Oregon. Here we will start a new life. And with the help of thousands of other settlers like ourselves, perhaps we can make this beautiful land a part of our beloved country. Much love from us all.

Your friend,
Abigail

Checking Up

1. Who were some of the first people to go to the Oregon Territory?
2. What were some hardships settlers met on the trail to Oregon?

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Making a Living in Oregon and Washington

The Lumber Industry

All the way from California to Canada, the Coast Ranges and the Cascades are

plywood *smoke jumper*
forest ranger *fish ladder*

How do the people of Oregon and Washington use their natural resources to create industries?

covered with forests. Many of the trees are as high as a 15-story building. Sometimes one tree furnishes enough lumber to build several houses.

This great timber belt is one of the most important in the world. Oregon is one of our leading timber states. Washington and California are also leaders in the production of lumber.